

SIN, SUFFERING, SATAN AND EVIL

Scripture's solution for the "problem" of evil

Jerod A. Gilcher

March 24, 2019

I. Introduction: the world—a house of horrors

- a. Well as we begin, I just want you to know that I really believe in what we're about to do here.
- b. And what we're about to do here is theology
- c. And the thing about theology is that it is not and was never intended to be mere abstract, theoretical ideas disconnected from real life—no!
- d. The essence of what theology is designed to do is holistic life-transformation! It is for life—it is for living!
- e. There is nothing theoretical about it—no! True theology is taking the most lofty, exalted thoughts about God and connecting them to the everyday issues in the trenches of life.
- f. And my job as a pastor—at least, *one* of my jobs, is to have things of eternal weight pressed into your souls!
- g. Part of what it means for me to disciple you is to help you understand all of life's deepest dilemmas in light of all that the Triune God is doing in and through Christ in the world!
- h. In other words, I exist on the planet to repair your wounded souls with the Word of God so that you can go back out there and fight in the trenches of the Great Commission—that is theology!
- i. And *that's* why we're doing these theology seminars every single month!
- j. To help you take the most lofty, exalted thoughts about God and connect them to the everyday issues in the trenches of life.
- k. The secret to a thriving soul is not to avoid thinking deeply about God, but to push ourselves deeper than ever into who God is!
- l. And tonight our topic is one of earth-shattering significance, because we touch upon one of the most sensitive nerves of our existence, namely, the reality of sin, suffering, Satan and evil in the world and how and why God allows it and controls it and does not prevent it.

- m. And we desperately need to talk about this! You don't need me to tell you that we live in a world that is *filled* with horrifying things.
- n. The pages of history drip with blood, they echo with war, they reek of death and are haunted with the nightmares of countless unspeakable acts committed with incredible brutality!
- o. I mean, even just the 20th century, with all of its technological progress and human innovation was the bloodiest in human history!
- WWI: 15 million
 - Under Stalin's regime: 20 million
 - WWII: 55 million
 - People's republic of China under general Mao: 40 million
- p. The question is: do we really see anything changing in the 21st century? I mean, are we going to kid ourselves into thinking that the nature of man's heart magically changed in the year 2000 and that the magical fairytale utopia is just beyond the horizon?
- q. We don't believe that, mostly because of what the New Testament says about where history is headed (especially in the book of Revelation) and the trajectory that we can see with our very own eyes makes us appropriately pessimistic about the power of mankind to turn things around.
- r. The world in which we live is a global house of horrors and as those who believe in the goodness and mercy and love and power and sovereignty of God this *seems* to pose a problem, does it not?
- s. And yet, you notice that the title for this seminar has the word problem in quotation marks.
- t. And I did that not to be calloused or cavalier, but because at the end of the day, the Bible just doesn't see this as a problem!
- u. Now, don't misunderstand—sin is a problem! Sin and evil are the most devastating dilemmas in the universe for human beings, because God hates sin and evil with righteous fury and on their own, there is nothing that human beings can do to fix it! That is an eternally significant problem!
- v. But the reason why I call it this the “problem” of evil is because although *we* feel like God's goodness and sovereignty is called into question by the

existence of evil, the Bible relieves our fears and lets us know that this is simply not the case!

- w. The Bible has an answer—it has a solution for the problem of evil—and it is glorious and hope-giving and triumphant and is one of the most—if not the deepest foundation of our joy!
- x. And what we must do is have the courage to open our Bibles dive into the deepest, darkest places of Scripture and be willing to believe what the Bible actually says about God and His relationship to sin, suffering, Satan and evil.
- y. And what the Bible says about God and His relationship to sin and evil—you ready for this, is that God is absolutely sovereign over all of it.
- z. That’s the solution for the “problem” of evil—the sovereignty of God—the absolute undisputed dominion of God over everything in the universe! *That’s* the solution! *That’s* where we’re going!
- aa. Or, as I’m going to argue, the sovereign *love* of God is the Bible’s deepest explanation for why there is sin and evil in the world!
- bb. And I ain’t gonna lie to you—this won’t be an easy thing to hear and it won’t be an easy thing to teach. In fact, tonight and next month are very likely going to be the greatest intellectual challenge of your entire lives.
- cc. You and I both are in real need of God’s grace tonight. And I have prayed much for you before teaching this seminar!
- dd. I have prayed that that instead of being skeptical and cynical and defensive that God would use His Word to open your eyes to see that His sovereignty is nothing to be threatened by, but rather something to rejoice *in*.
- ee. That instead of stiff-arming the sovereignty of God over sin and evil, that you would instead *melt* in submission to what you see in the text!
- ff. And what you *have* to get is that to withstand the 21st century with its ever-increasing instability and hostility towards people like us, you need something more than a soft, non-theological cushion of warmth.
- gg. No, what you need is a gloriously big God! You need a God who is not just generally or “kinda” sovereign, but rather One who governs everything that comes to pass.

- hh. You need a God who will not apologize for His absolute dominion over everything and thankfully...that is the only God there is!
- ii. What we need to hear is that sin and evil and the horrors of this world are not only known by God and allowed by God and permitted by God, but even more than that...they were foreordained and even predestined by God for the glory of His Son.
- jj. That's the answer and so, ready or not, here we go!

II. Proposition

- a. My aim and purpose tonight is to demonstrate from Scripture that the deepest, most ultimate explanation for the existence of sin and evil in the world is the sovereign love of God.
- b. Not just the sovereignty of God alone and not just the love of God alone, but *the sovereign love of God is the deepest explanation for the existence of sin and evil in the world.*
- c. I'm going to argue that, in some mystery that we may never fully comprehend in this life, that God lovingly designed a plan of salvation that included sin, evil and sinners who would need a Savior.
- d. And I'm going to argue that the reason He did that, was so that in the end, Jesus Christ would be put on display for the supremely valuable treasure that He is!
- e. Now, don't misunderstand! God is still holy, sinners are still guilty, man is still responsible for every decision he makes—none of that changes whatsoever!
- f. I'm just arguing that in some mystery, incomprehensible to human logic, God ordained that sin and evil would exist in the world in such a way so that, in the end, when all of history is over, the beauty and supremacy of Jesus Christ would be put on display for our everlasting joy forever!
- g. In other words, my aim is to demonstrate from the Bible that the sovereign love of God ordained that sin and evil would exist to display the supremacy of the Son for our everlasting satisfaction forever.
- h. I'm going to prove this with 6 parts:

- Part I—Pose the ultimate questions about sovereignty and evil
- Part II—Present the solution to the problem of evil: *the sovereign love of God to display the supremacy of Christ*
- Part III—Portray of the Biblical evidence of the sovereignty of God...over everything
- Part IV—Probe the tension between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility
- Part V—Prove that sin and evil serve the sovereign plan of God in bringing glory to Christ
- Part VI—Propose answers to common objections about the sovereignty of God (as well as answer your questions)
 - Finish with some applications

III. Part I—Posing the ultimate questions and possible solutions to the “problem” of evil

- a. Now, to get us started we need to ask a series of really difficult, challenging and yet, *very necessary* questions, all of which will be answered in some form or another before we’re done. For instance:
 - Is God in absolute sovereign control over sin, Satan, evil and suffering?
 - If God is sovereign over sin and evil, in what sense is God sovereign over those things? What is His exactly relationship *to* those things?
 - Does God merely just *know* about those things beforehand?
 - Does God just passively allow or “let” sin and evil happen and then afterwards turn it for good?
 - Or, did God before time actually *predestine* and *design* sin and evil to exist? In other words, in *some* mystery,

was it always His plan to write sin and evil into the script of history?

- And if God *did* predestine and design sin and evil to exist, how do we reconcile that with other perfections of God that don't seem compatible, like holiness, righteousness, goodness and love?
- If God *did* predestine that sin and evil would exist, from what motive would God do this? *Why* on earth would He design a plan which includes sin, evil and sinners who need a Savior? *Why* would He do it like this?
- Was there not a better, alternative plan that God could have created—one without sin and evil?
- How could God possibly have ordained a plan which included such suffering and evil? From what motive would He do that? What could the ultimate end goal that would make a plan that included sin and evil worth it in the end?
- If God is sovereign over the sin and evil that people commit, how can God hold those individuals fully responsible for those acts which He Himself ordained?
- Does God's sovereignty over evil in any way lessen the guilt or responsibility of those who commit acts of sin and evil?

b. And if you've done any reading on this issue of how the sovereignty of God relates to sin and evil, theologians and philosophers typically try to resolve or explain the "problem" of evil like this:

- If God is all-powerful, He is thus able to prevent sin and evil
- If God is all-good, He of course wants to prevent sin and evil
- But evil exists
- Therefore, we are left with the following conclusions:

- Either a) God is not all-powerful and is *unable* to prevent sin and evil
 - Or, b) God is not all-good and *unwilling* to prevent sin and evil
 - Or, c) God does not exist
- c. And yet, what I don't like about that traditional way of trying to trying to solve the problem of evil is that although it gives the impression of being logical, it doesn't actually use the logic of the Bible—which we call theology!
- d. It makes too many assumptions about God's power and goodness and what He will and will not do with His power and goodness.
- e. In other words, we assume that because God *is* all-powerful *and* all-good that He is thus obligated to prevent all sin and evil. And yet, is that what the Bible actually says God's goodness and power requires Him to do?
- f. In other words, does God's power and goodness require Him to prevent all sin and evil?
- g. My question is: what if God's power and goodness actually meant designing a plan in which sin and evil and suffering would exist? And what if God's power and goodness meant designing a plan in which God, in the end, would be more glorified and we would be more satisfied than if sin and evil had not existed?
- h. What if the purpose of that plan was to put His power and goodness on display in such a way that could not have been done unless sin and evil had existed?
- i. What I'm saying is, there has to be and *is* another, alternative way resolving the tension between God and the existence of sin and evil.
- j. And some people try to solve the problem of evil by saying things like:
 - Alternative #1: "Well, God knew that was going to happen..."
 - Yeah, but how does that help things? Does the fact that God merely knew about it solve anything? In fact, that only creates more problems.

- To be sure, God *did* know that that evil event was going to happen because He has known everything perfectly from all eternity, right?
- But you can feel in your bones that that answer is not sufficient, can't you? Because it portrays God inevitably as a passive bystander who merely knows and watches sin and evil happen and then *afterwards* makes the best of it and turns it for good.
 - And you might think: "What's wrong with that?" Well, nothing initially *except for the fact that the Bible indicates that God does so much more than merely know beforehand that an evil event is about to take place!*
- Alternative #2: "Well, God allowed/permitted that evil thing to happen..."
 - And to be sure, there is a level where God does allow/permit sin and evil to take place, but once again the problem is: *the Bible indicates that God does so much more than merely permit/allow an evil event is about to take place!*
 - The Bible is so clear that does more than passively allow sin and evil to happen and then try to make the best of it.
- Alternative #3: "Man's free will [alternatively, Satan] is the ultimate reason why sin and evil exists. God doesn't have anything to do with that!"
 - Now I get why people say this—people lay the blame at the feet of sinful man or Satan as a way to demonstrate that God is not to blame, God is not weak, sinful or guilty.
 - In other words, people use this explanation as a way to uphold the righteousness of God and to show that sinners and Satan alone bear the responsibility of sin and evil, because they are the very ones doing the sin and evil.
 - And that's right! We *should* fight for the righteousness and holiness of God and we should uphold man's full responsibility as guilty of sin and evil.

- There are three problems, however, with this explanation:
 1. The free will of sinners and Satan (depending on how you define “free will”) is not actually in the Bible.
 2. To say that sinners or Satan are the *ultimate* explanation for sin and evil in the world (as in, the deepest answer that *exists!*) implies something very, very dangerous—if not heretical, *namely*, that there is something outside of God that He is either unwilling or unable to control, namely, the supposed “free will” of Satan or man.
 - Are we really willing to go there and say that? And more importantly, is that *actually* what the Scriptures say?
 3. This explanation again makes God an unwillingly passive spectator since He has to, out of respect for man’s free will, let man act first and then make the best out of the mess he makes.
 - Again, all of those things are concepts completely foreign to the God of the Bible.
- k. So if those attempts to solve the problem of evil are inadequate and unbiblical—and I’m arguing that they *are*, then that means there has to be a truly Biblical way to understand God’s relationship to sin and evil in the world.
- l. That means that we are still left with the only true Biblical explanation and solution for why sin and evil exists in the world.

- m. And in the spirit of full disclosure I'm going to tell you up front what I believe the Bible says is the solution for the problem of evil.

IV. Part II: Present the solution to the problem of evil: *the sovereign love of God to display the supremacy of Christ*

- a. Here is what I believe is the ultimate, Biblical explanation and solution for the so-called “problem” of evil.
- Here is why sin, suffering, Satan and evil exists—i.e., this solves the “problem” of evil (at least from the Bible’s perspective)!
 - The ultimate, final answer for the problem of evil lies in the infinite, unfathomable depths of the love of God.
 - Yes—you heard me right! The love of God *is* the deepest explanation for why there is sin and evil in the world. In other words, the fact that sin and evil exists in the world lies ultimately in the fact that God is a God of infinite love and mercy.
 - Which I realize, sounds crazy and counter-intuitive and impossible to prove, because skeptics will often say, “if God is a God of love, how can there be evil in the world?” and yet, I am going to argue that sin and evil exists in the world *precisely because* God is a God of love.
 - God is a God of love not despite the fact that sin and evil exists, but God is a God of love *precisely because* sin and evil exists!
 - And let me nuance that just a bit: the *sovereign* love of God is the deepest, Biblical solution for the problem of evil.
 - Not the sovereignty of God by itself, nor the love of God by itself as if you can divide up God’s attributes, but those two attributes of God, in particular, fused and inseparable together.
 - In other words, the sovereignty of God by which He controls the universe and everything in it—including the

sinful and evil acts of human beings, is infused *by* and inseparable *from* the infinite love of God!

- In other words, I'm saying that God had a loving and sovereign plan that included even the existence of sin, evil and sinners who would need a Savior.
 - Or, to put it another way: God ordained that sin and evil would exist in the world for ultimately loving and wise and glorious reasons.
 - You see, what I'm going to argue tonight (and next month) is that in some mystery that we may never fully understand in this life, is that God, before time, lovingly designed that sin and evil would exist for the advance of His eternal plan of bringing glory to Christ for the everlasting enjoyment of the His redeemed forever (repeat!).
 - Or, the sovereign love of God ordained that sin and evil would exist to display the supremacy of His Son for our everlasting satisfaction forever.
- b. There! There's my answer! Hard though it may be to swallow, that—I believe, is Scripture's solution for the problem of evil!
- c. Sin and evil in the world is all about God's loving, global plan of bringing glory to Jesus Christ for the everlasting joy of all the nations!
- d. The sovereign love of God ordained that sin and evil would exist to display the supremacy of the Son for our everlasting satisfaction forever.
- Don't you see? It's all about the supremacy and beauty of Jesus Christ for our everlasting enjoyment! Sin and evil in the world is all about God's plan of helping us most clearly see the worth and value and beauty and supremacy of Jesus Christ.
 - That's why God ultimately ordained that sin and evil would exist! It's all about the glory of Christ!
- e. So, again, my aim tonight is to prove that the sovereign love of God ordained that *sin and evil would exist to display the supremacy of His Son for our everlasting satisfaction forever!*

- f. And this, of course, leads to some really crucial questions, doesn't it?
- How possibly could the existence of sin and evil and suffering lead to the glory of Christ for our everlasting joy? How will the glory of Christ be displayed through and because of the existence of sin and evil?
 - If God's love means that He does what's best for us, how does this possibly fit with a plan that included sin and evil? How can desire to give us what is best include a plan which includes sin and evil?
 - Is the eternal glory of Christ for our everlasting enjoyment truly a good enough reason to craft a plan that includes sin and evil? How is this loving? How this good news? Will the glory of Christ really be worth it in the end?
 - How do we reconcile the sovereign love of God with man's responsibility? If God ordained that sin and evil would exist, how can He hold humans responsible for the sin and evil they commit?
 - And before we're done tonight *and* next month, we're going to answer every single one of those questions and more!
 - All with the ultimate aim of helping you trust God as absolutely sovereign, and of treasuring Him as infinitely satisfying!

V. Part III—A presentation of the meaning of the sovereignty of God

- a. You see, now I've got something to prove here, don't I? I've got to prove that my premise is true.
- b. And my premise is that sin and evil exists *ultimately* because of the sovereign love of God.
- c. Or to put it another way, before time God lovingly designed that sin and evil would exist for the advance of His eternal plan of bringing glory to Christ for our everlasting enjoyment forever.
- d. Without minimizing God's holiness or man's responsibility in any way, I am claiming that the Bible says that God had a loving and sovereign plan before time to put Christ on full display through the existence of sin, evil and sinners who would need a Savior.
- e. To put it even another way: I'm claiming that before time, God lovingly designed a plan that would bring global glory to Christ from all the nations *and* that sin and evil were the best way to bring about the full display of the beauty and supremacy of Christ for our everlasting enjoyment forever!
- f. I'm arguing that sin and evil in the world is the best of all possible plans that God could have designed, because that plan will result in causing us to see Jesus Christ for the supremely valuable treasure that He is!
- g. What this means, though, is that the first order of business is to prove that God, in fact, absolutely sovereign over absolutely everything!
- h. Because if we can prove that God is sovereign over everything—including sin and evil, then we will be able to see that sin and evil exists *ultimately* because of the sovereign love of God to give us what is best.
- i. And the absolute sovereignty of God is an easy thing to prove from the Bible!
- j. The question is: what does the sovereignty of God mean? What does it *mean* that God is sovereign? What would you say? What's your definition of the sovereignty of God?
- k. Definition of the sovereignty of God

- The sovereignty of God is His infinite, inexhaustible power to accomplish everything He predestined before the foundation of the world.
- God's sovereignty means that in eternity past God ordained, predestined and designed every moment of every event that would ever take place (including sin and evil), *and* that He currently guides, governs and controls *every* detail of what He designed (including sin and evil) for the full and eternal display of the supremacy of Christ for our eternal enjoyment forever.
 - “We believe that God, from all eternity, in order to display the full extent of His glory for the eternal and ever-increasing enjoyment of all who love Him, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His will, freely and unchangeably ordain and foreknow whatever comes to pass. We believe that God upholds and governs all things – from galaxies to subatomic particles, from the forces of nature to the movements of nations, and from the public plans of politicians to the secret acts of solitary persons— all in accord with His eternal, all-wise purposes to glorify Himself, yet in such a way that He never sins, nor ever condemns a person unjustly; but that His ordaining and governing all things is compatible with the moral accountability of all persons created in His image.” (Bethlehem Baptist Church doctrinal statement, 3.1)

1. Now you notice that I use the terms ordain, predestine and design fairly interchangeably and all of these terms describe God's actions in eternity past.
 - To fully understand the sovereignty of God we have to remember that God is not on some willy-nilly, mad-scramble to pull off some 4th quarter hail Mary—no!
 - Everything that God does in real time, is what He planned and predestined to do before the foundation of the world.
 - Isaiah 46:9-10
 - זָכְרוּ רֵאשֻׁנוֹת מְעוֹלָם כִּי אֲנֹכִי אֵל וְאֵין עוֹד אֱלֹהִים וְאֶפֶס כְּמוֹנִי:
מִגִּיד מִרְאשִׁית אַחֲרִית וּמִקֶּדֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִעְשׂוּ אִמַר עֲצָתִי
תְּקוּם וְכֹל-הִפְצִי אֲעִשֶׂה:

- Do you hear what God just said? He declared the end from the beginning!
- Meaning: before anything existed, He had already declared, decreed and decided in eternity what the end would be!
- And what else did God say? "...and from ancient times things which have not been done saying, 'My purpose shall be established and I shall accomplish all of My good pleasure.'"
 - Meaning what? Before time God determined that everything He planned, He would accomplish!
 - You see? Everything is planned? Everything is predestined! Everything is predetermined! Not *one* single detail is accidental or left to chance or outside of what God had predetermined from before time began!
 - It's not enough to say that God only knew about or allows things to happen—rather, we must be willing to say, on Biblical grounds, that God decreed, predetermined and ordained all things—including even sin and evil.
 - Calvin even takes the risk and says that God willed the fall of Adam and sin in the world:
 - “Accordingly it cannot be denied that before creating man, God foresaw to what end he would come; He foresaw it, because He had so ordained it in His counsel...No one should think it strange if I say that God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and with it the ruin of all his posterity, but also willed it. For just as it is part of His wisdom that He foresees all future events, so it is part of His power that He rules and governs all things by His hand. I have no hesitation...[in

saying]...that God's will is the necessity of all things, and that what He has ordained and willed must necessarily come to pass, just as everything which He has foreseen will surely happen." (Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, pp. 478-9)

- i.e., the deepest reason why God foreknows all things is because He is the One who also ordained all things.
- But then, notice, the specific kinds of details God planned and predestined. Look at v. 11:
 - קָרָא מִמְזֻרָח עֵיט מֵאֲרָץ מְרֻחָק אִישׁ 'עֲצָתוֹ' "עֲצָתִי" אֶף־דִּבְרֹתַי אֶף־אֲבִיאָנָה יִצְרָתִי אֶף־אֶעֱשֶׂנָה: 8
 - Do you see that? Eagles that fly over the desert looking for prey and people that travel over distant lands all carry out His sovereign purposes planned and predestined before time!
 - Psalm 139:16
 - גָּלְמִיָּהּ רָאָה עֵינָיִךָ וְעַל־סִפְרֶךָ כָּל־יְמֵי יָצָרְתָּ וְיָלְדָתָּ בְּקֶדֶם:
- m. And yet, you also notice that I use the terms guide, govern and control also interchangeably.
 - And all of those terms describe God's actions in the present.
 - In other words, the sovereignty of God doesn't merely mean that He made a plan, set it in motion and then stands back uninvolved and disconnected—watching from afar with indifference—no!

- The sovereignty of God *means* that God is actively and personally and intimately involved with every single detail that He Himself planned and predestined—directing, controlling, bringing and guiding every event to His predetermined outcome!
- Ephesians 1:11
 - ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ.
 - The context of Ephesians 1 is that the apostle Paul is unfolding the entire sovereign plan of God which was designed in eternity past.
 - But notice very carefully what Paul says in v. 11: προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν [here it is!] τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ.
 - There! Did you see it? God *is working* all things according to the counsel of His will!
 - God is working *all things* according to the counsel of His will!
 - Notice: God's will = what God planned and predestined before the ages began. This is His eternal plan.
 - Notice: God is working all things according to His will.
 - This means God is weaving and orchestrating and directing every event of human history *and* your life to match precisely the blueprints of His will which He designed before the universe was made!

- “[This is]...the divine energy whereby the Creator preserves all His creatures, is operative in all that comes to pass in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end.” (*Systematic Theology*, Berkof, p. 166)

- Daniel 4:34-35

○ וְלִקְצֵת יוֹמֵיהָ אֲנִי נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר עֵינִיו לְשִׁמְיָא גְּטִלַּת וּמְנַדְעֵי עָלַי יִתּוּב 'וּלְעֵלְיָא' 'וּלְעֵלְאָה' בְּרִכְתּוֹת וּלְתֵי עֵלְמָא שְׂבַחַת וְהַדְרַת דְּי שְׁלֹטְנָה שְׁלֹטֵן עָלֵם וּמְלֻכּוּתָהּ עִם-דְּרַר וְדָר:
 וְכָל-דְּאָרִי אַרְעָא כְּלָה חֲשִׁיבִין וְכִמְצָבִיָּה עֵבֵל בְּחִיל שְׁמִיָּא
 וְדְאָרִי 'וְדִיבִי' אַרְעָא וְלֹא אִתִּי דִּי-יִמְחָא בִּידָהּ וְיִאמַר לָהּ מָה
 עֲבַדְתָּ:

- Again, it's crucial to note here: the text does not say that God merely passively allows what happens to happen and then simply makes the best of it—rather, He has an eternal dominion and kingdom and He always actively does according to His will in heaven and on earth.
 - God doesn't do anything outside of what He had already predestined in eternity past, but only does what He had decreed before the ages began.
 - God's sovereignty means that God wrote the script of history in eternity past and like an all-wise and all-powerful Director He directs and controls every aspect of what He wrote.
 - Or, God like an all-wise and all-powerful Architect designed every event in blueprints of history that would ever take place and works all things out *exactly* as He designed.
- n. So again, that's the sovereignty of God, namely His infinite, inexhaustible power to accomplish everything He predestined before the foundation of the world.

VI. Part III—A portrayal of the Biblical evidence of the sovereignty of God...over everything

- a. In other words, our mission now is to demonstrate, from Scripture, the absolute sovereignty of God over every realm of existence.
- b. This is what we call the “meticulous” sovereignty of God—which means, we want to demonstrate from the Bible that God has absolute, undisputed dominion not only over the universe as a whole, but *also* the meticulous details within the universe.
- c. That there’s nothing random or accidental in the universe, but that all things are under the jurisdiction and command of God’s authority.
- d. And the Bible identifies at least 10 realms over which God has absolute, sovereign control.
- e. And you’ll notice that, funnel-like, we will start with the broadest possible categories and work our way down to the most specific and particular.

1. The universe
2. Creation
3. Nations
4. Kings and authorities
5. Individuals and their individual actions and decisions
6. The minutia (details) of life
7. Satan and demons
8. Sickness and suffering
9. Natural evil (earthquakes, hurricanes)
10. Moral evil (sinful actions of human beings)

- 1st realm—God is sovereign over the entirety of the universe

- Job 42:2

- יָדַעְתִּי כִּי-כֹל תּוּקַל וְלֹא-יִבָּצֵר מִמֶּנּוּ מְזִמָּה:

- After having his life decimated by tragedy, Job understood at the end that God had sovereign power to do whatever He wanted and that nothing could prevent God from doing what He had predetermined to do!

○ Psalm 115:3

▪ וְאֱלֹהֵינוּ בַשָּׁמַיִם כֹּל אֲשֶׁר-חָפֵץ עָשָׂה:

- What comforted the Psalm writer in the midst of hostile persecution was that God does whatever He darn well pleases.
- God being בַּשָּׁמַיִם, “in the heavens”, does not describe His detachment from the affairs of life, but rather His supremacy over the affairs of life.
- And the Psalm writer declares what? That God does what He pleases most of the time—except for when man’s free will gets in the way?
 - No! God does whatever He pleases *all* of the time, unhindered and unobstructed by evil actions of humans or demons.
 - Everything that God has determined to do, He does freely without any constraints or limits except what He Himself determines!
 - He is invincible! He is unconquerable! He is unstoppable! He is uncontainable!

○ Isaiah 46:9-10

▪ זָכְרוּ רֵאשִׁוֹנוֹת מֵעוֹלָם כִּי אֲנֹכִי אֵל וְאֵין עוֹד אֱלֹהִים
וְאֶפֶס כְּמוֹנִי:
מִגִּיד מִרְאשִׁית אַחֲרִית וּמִקֶּדֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא-נִעְשׂוּ אִמְרֵי
עֲצָתִי תְקוּם וְכָל-חֲפָצַי אֲעֵשֶׂה:

- Again, notice the comprehensive scope over which God is in control—the beginning, the end and everything in between!
- And again, the text is clear that everything God has decided will happen, will happen *exactly* as He planned!

- Daniel 4:35-36

- ולקצת יומיה אנה נבוכדנצר עיניו לשמיא גטלת ומנדעי עלי יתוב 'ולעליא' 'ולעלאה' ברכת ולתי עלמא שבחת והדרת די שלטנה שלטן עלם ומלכותה עם-דר ודר:
'וכל-דארי' 'וכל-דירי' ארעא פלה חשיבין וכמצביה עבד בחיל שמיא 'נדארי' 'ודירי' ארעא ולא איתי די-מתא בילה וגאמר לה מה עבדת:

- Romans 11:33-36

- Ω βάθος πλούτου και σοφίας και γνώσεως θεοῦ·
ὡς ἀνεξεραύνητα τὰ κρύματα αὐτοῦ και
ἀνεξιχνίαστοι αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ. Τίς γὰρ ἔγνω νοῦν
κυρίου; ἢ τίς σύμβουλος αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο; ἢ τίς
προέδωκεν αὐτῷ, και ἀνταποδοθήσεται αὐτῷ; ὅτι
ἐξ αὐτοῦ και δι' αὐτοῦ και εἰς αὐτὸν τὰ πάντα·
αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.

- Notice very carefully:

- *From* God are “all things”: that means there is not one thing that takes place in the world that is outside of His sovereign control.
- *Through* God are “all things”: nothing happens in the world that is without His direct guidance and supervision. He has direct oversight over every moment of every event, governing and guiding it to result in the exact outcome which He determined!
- *To* God are “all things”: every single thing that transpires in history will, in the end, in some way or another, wind up resulting in the glory of God.
 - When history is all said and done there will not be one embarrassing

deformity or one event that will not in some way, shape or form put God on display as a treasure of infinite value.

- Ephesians 1:11
 - ἐν ᾧ καὶ ἐκληρώθημεν προορισθέντες κατὰ πρόθεσιν τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐνεργοῦντος κατὰ τὴν βουλήν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ.
- 2nd realm—God is sovereign over all creation
 - Planets, stars and space
 - Job 9:7
 - “Who commands the sun not to shine, And sets a seal upon the stars;”
 - Job 26:7
 - “He stretches out the north over empty space And hangs the earth on nothing.”
 - 38:31–33
 - "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, Or loose the cords of Orion? 32 Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, And guide the Bear with her satellites? 33 Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, Or fix their rule over the earth?"
 - Isaiah 40:26
 - שְׂאוּ-מְרוֹם עֵינֵיכֶם וּרְאוּ מִי־בְרָא אֱלֹהֵי הַמּוֹצֵיא בְּמִסְפָּר צְבָאָם לְכֹלֵם בְּשֵׁם יְקִרָּא מְרֹב אוֹנִים וְאַמִּיץ כֹּחַ אִישׁ לֹא נִעְדָּר: ס
 - Jeremiah 31:35
 - כִּהְיוּ אָמַר יְהוָה נִתְּן שְׁלֹשׁ לְאֹר יוֹמָם חֲקֵת יָרֵחַ וְכוֹכְבִים לְאֹר לַיְלָה רִגְעַ הַיָּם וַיְהִימוּ גִלְיוֹ יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ:
 - Oceans, seas and rivers

- Job 38:8-11
 - "Or who enclosed the sea with doors When, bursting forth, it went out from the womb; 9 When I made [it]...I placed boundaries on it And set a bolt and doors, 11 And I said, 'Thus far you shall come, but no farther; And here shall your proud waves stop!'"

- Psalm 89:9-12
 - "You rule the swelling of the sea; When its waves rise, You still them...11 The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; The world and all it contains, You have founded them. 12 The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon shout for joy at Your name."

- Psalm 104:10-13
 - "He sends forth springs in the valleys; They flow between the mountains; 11 They give drink to every beast of the field; The wild donkeys quench their thirst. 12 Beside them the birds of the heavens dwell; They lift up their voices among the branches. 13 He waters the mountains from His upper chambers; The earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works."

- Psalm 135:5-6
 - כִּי אֲנִי יִדְעֵתִי כִּי־גָדוֹל יְהוָה וְאֵלֹהֵינוּ מִכָּל־אֱלֹהִים:
כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־חָפֵץ יְהוָה עָשָׂה בַשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ בַּיַּמִּים
וְכָל־תְּהוֹמוֹת:

- Matthew 8:25-27
 - καὶ προσελθόντες ἤγειραν αὐτὸν λέγοντες· Κύριε, σῶσον, ἀπολλύμεθα. καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· Τί δειλοί ἐστε, ὀλιγόπιστοι; τότε ἐγερθεὶς ἐπετίμησεν τοῖς ἀνέμοις καὶ τῇ θαλάσῃ, καὶ ἐγένετο γαλήνη μεγάλη. οἱ δὲ ἄνθρωποι ἐθαύμασαν λέγοντες· Ποταπὸς ἐστὶν οὗτος ὅτι καὶ οἱ ἄνεμοι καὶ ἡ θάλασσα αὐτῷ ὑπακούουσιν;
- Trees, grass and vegetation
 - Job 35:25-27
 - “Who has cleft a channel for the flood, Or a way for the thunderbolt, 26 To bring rain on a land without people, On a desert without a man in it, 27 To satisfy the waste and desolate land And to make the seeds of grass to sprout?”
 - Psalm 104:14-17
 - “He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth, 15 And wine which makes man's heart glad, So that he may make his face glisten with oil, And food which sustains man's heart. 16 The trees of the LORD drink their fill, The cedars of Lebanon which He planted, 17 Where the birds build their nests, And the stork, whose home is the fir trees.”
 - Psalm 147:7-8
 - עָנָו לַיהוָה בְּתוֹקָה וּמָרוּ לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכִנּוּר׃
הַמְכֹסֶה שָׁמַיִם בְּעָבִים הַמְכִּין לְאֶרֶץ מִטָּר
הַמְצַמֵּם הַרִים הַצִּיר׃
- Weather (rain, snow, clouds, lighting and wind)
 - Psalm 147:8

- “Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who provides rain for the earth, Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.”
- Psalm 147:15-17
 - “He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. 16 He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes. 17 He casts forth His ice as fragments; Who can stand before His cold?”
- Jeremiah 10:12-13
 - “It is He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; And by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens. 13 When He utters His voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, And He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain, And brings out the wind from His storehouses” (cf. Psalm 135:7)
- Animals, birds and wild beasts
 - Genesis 2:19
 - וַיִּצְרֹף יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים מִן־הָאֲדָמָה כָּל־תַּיִת הַשָּׂדֶה וְאֵת כָּל־עֵוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיָּבֵא אֶל־הָאָדָם לְרְאוֹת מֶה־יִּקְרָא־לּוֹ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָא־לּוֹ הָאָדָם נִפְשׁ חַיָּה הוּא שְׁמוֹ:
 - 2 Kings 2:23-24
 - “Then [Elisha] went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, "Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!" 24 When he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore up forty-two lads of their number.”
 - 2 Kings 17:25

• וַיְהִי בַתְּחִלַּת שְׁבַתְּכֶם שָׁם לֹא יֵרְאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה
וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה בָּהֶם אֶת־הָאֲרִיֹּת וַיַּהֲרִיבוּ הָרְגָיִם בָּהֶם:

▪ Psalm 104:24-30

- “O LORD, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions. 25 There is the sea, great and broad, In which are swarms without number, Animals both small and great. 26 There the ships move along, And Leviathan, which You have formed to sport in it. 27 They all wait for You To give them their food in due season. 28 You give to them, they gather it up; You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good. 29 You hide Your face, they are dismayed; You take away their spirit, they expire And return to their dust. 30 You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the ground.

▪ Isaiah 11:6-9

- וְגַר זֵאֵב עִם־כֶּבֶשׂ וְנֹמֵר עִם־אֲדָמִי יִרְבֹּץ וְלַעֲגֹל
וְכַפִּיר וּמְרִיא יִחַדּוּ וְנֹעַר קִטָּן נִהְגָּ בָּם:
וּפְרָה וְדֹב תִרְעִינָה יַחַדּוּ יִרְבְּצוּ יַלְדֵיהֶן וְאַרְיֵה
כַּבְּקָר יֹאכַל־חֶבֶן:
וְשִׁעִשְׁע יוֹנֵק עַל־חֵר פִּתּוֹן וְעַל מְאוֹרֵת צָפְעוֹנָי
גִּמּוּל יָדוֹ הִדָּה:
לֹא־יִרְעוּ וְלֹא־יִשְׁחִיתוּ בְּכָל־חֵר קִדְשֵׁי כְּיִמְלֹאָה
הָאָרֶץ דְּעַה אֶת־יְהוָה פְּמִים לַיָּם מְכֹסִים: פ

▪ Daniel 6:22

- אֱלֹהֵי שְׁלַח מְלֹאכָה וְסֹגֵר פֶּם אַרְיֹתָא וְלֹא
חַבְלוֹנִי פֶל־קָבֵל דִּי קִדְמוּהִי זְכוּ הַשְׁתַּבַּחַת לִי
וְאַף 'קִדְמוּד' 'קִדְמוּד' מְלֹכָא חַבּוּלָה לָא עַבְדַּת:

▪ Jonah 1:17

- וַיִּמַן יְהוָה דָּג גָּדוֹל לְבָלַע אֶת־יוֹנָה וַיְהִי יוֹנָה בְּמִעֵי
הַדָּג שְׁלֹשָׁה יָמִים וּשְׁלֹשָׁה לַיְלֹת:

▪ Jonah 4:7

- וַיִּמְן הָאֱלֹהִים תּוֹלְעַת בְּעֵלּוֹת הַשָּׁמַר לְמַחֲרַת וַתֵּדָא אֶת־הַקִּיקָיוֹן וַיִּבָּשׁ:
- Matthew 10:29
 - οὐχὶ δύο στρουθία ἀσσαρίου πωλεῖται; καὶ ἐν ἑξ αὐτῶν οὐ πεσεῖται ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ἄνευ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν.
- Summary of the sovereignty of God over His creation
 - It's clear, isn't it? Everything from the orbit of planets in galaxies that NASA will never see, flowers that bloom in the desert that mankind will never smell, hurricane winds and the gentle breeze, the mouths of lions and the lifespans of sparrows are all under the absolute undisputed dominion of God.
- 3rd realm—God is sovereign over the nations
 - Genesis 11:1-9
 - Job 12:23-25
 - "He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away. 24 He deprives of intelligence the chiefs of the earth's people And makes them wander in a pathless waste. 25 They grope in darkness with no light, And He makes them stagger like a drunken man."
 - Psalm 33:10-11
 - "The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. 11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation."
 - Isaiah 40:15, 17
 - הֵן גּוֹיִם כְּמַר מְדָלִי וּכְשַׁחַק מֵאֲזַנִּים נִחְשָׁבוּ הֵן אַיִם כְּצֶמֶר יָטוּלוּ:
כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם כְּצֶמֶר נִגְדּוּ מֵאַפָּס וַתְּהִי נִחְשָׁבוּ־לוֹ:
 - Acts 17:26

- Πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἐξουσίαις ὑπερεχούσαις ὑποτασσέσθω, οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ἐξουσία εἰ μὴ ὑπὸ θεοῦ, αἱ δὲ οὖσαι ὑπὸ θεοῦ τεταγμέναι εἰσίν.
- Revelation 17:16-17
 - Describes 10 future kings who will join the antichrist in a global alliance of evil.
 - V. 17: ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἔδωκεν εἰς τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν ποιῆσαι τὴν γνώμην αὐτοῦ, καὶ ποιῆσαι μίαν γνώμην καὶ δοῦναι τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτῶν τῷ θηρίῳ, ἄχρη τελεσθήσονται οἱ λόγοι τοῦ θεοῦ.
 - Summary of God's sovereignty over kings, governments and authorities:
 - Every king, ruler, president and tyrant in history was ordained and ruled by God. And every single one of them fulfilled only what God had decreed and could not operate independently on their own outside of His constraining power!
 - Trump, Obama, Clinton, Stalin, Hitler, Nero and Pharaoh—God reigns and rules over them all!
- 5th realm—God is sovereign over individuals and their individual actions and decisions
 - Genesis 20:6
 - וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים בְּחַלְמֵם גַּם אָנֹכִי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי בְתָם- לְבַבְךָ עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת וְאָחַזְשָׁךְ גַּם-אָנֹכִי אוֹתְךָ מִחַטּוֹ-לִי עַל- כֵּן לֹא-נִתְּתִיךָ לְנֶזֶעַ אֱלֹהֵי:
 - Job 14:5
 - אִם תְּרוֹצְצִים יָמָיו מִסְפָּר-חַדְשָׁיו אַתָּה חָקוֹ "תִּקְיוֹ" עָשִׂיתָ וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר:

- Psalm 139:16
 - גְּלִמְיָו רָאָו עֵינָיָהּ וְעַל־סִפְרָהּ כָּלֵם יִכְתְּבוּ יָמִים יִצְּרוּ
'וְלֹא' אֶחָד בָּהֶם:
- Proverbs 16:1
 - לְאָדָם מַעֲרִכֵי־לֵב וּמִיָּהוָה מַעֲנֶה לְשׁוֹן:
- Proverbs 16:9
 - לֵב אָדָם יִחְשָׁב דְּרָכּוֹ וַיְהִיָּה יָכִין צִעְדּוֹ:
- Proverbs 19:21
 - לֵב אָדָם יִחְשָׁב דְּרָכּוֹ וַיְהִיָּה יָכִין צִעְדּוֹ:
- Proverbs 20:24
 - מִיָּהוָה מַצְעָדֵי־גִבּוֹר וְאָדָם מֵה־יָכִין דְּרָכּוֹ:
- Jeremiah 1:5
 - בְּטֶרֶם אֶצְוֶהָ בְּכֶטֶן יְדַעְתִּיהָ וּבְטֶרֶם תֵּצֵא מִרֶחֶם
הַקֶּדֶשׁ תִּקְרֶה נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם נְתַתִּיהָ:
- Acts 17:26
 - ἐποίησέν τε ἐξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων
κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ παντὸς προσώπου τῆς γῆς, ὁρίσας
προστεταγμένους καιροὺς καὶ τὰς ὁροθεσίας τῆς
κατοικίας αὐτῶν
- Cf. the doctrine of Election
 - Summary of God's sovereignty over individual people:
 - Every single moment of our lives was planned and prepared by God before the foundation of the world—who we'd be, what we'd do, where we'd live—without violating our personal responsibility in *any* way, God predetermined all of that before time began!
 - 6th realm—God is sovereign over the minutia of life

- Chariot wheels: Exodus 14:24-25
 - “At the morning watch, the LORD looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. 25 He caused their chariot wheels to swerve, and He made them drive with difficulty; so the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from Israel, for the LORD is fighting for them against the Egyptians.”

- Arrows: 1 Kings 22:34
 - “Now a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the fight; for I am severely wounded.””

- The book of Esther
 - The insomnia of a pagan king ordained by God to save His people

- Movement of clouds over moon: Job 26:8-9
 - "He wraps up the waters in His clouds, And the cloud does not burst under them. 9 He obscures the face of the full moon And spreads His cloud over it.”

- Dice: Proverbs 16:33
 - בְּחֵיק יוֹטֵל אֶת-הַגּוֹרֵל וּמִיָּהוָה כָּל-מַשְׁפָּטָיו:
 - The modern-day equivalent to that verse would read something like this: “Every role of the dice in Las Vegas is determined by the God of the universe.”

- Hair: Matthew 10:30
 - ὑμῶν δὲ καὶ αἱ τρίχες τῆς κεφαλῆς πᾶσαι ἠριθμημέναι εἰσίν.
 - Summary of God’s sovereignty over the minutia of life:

- The Bible is clear and undeniable! The sovereignty of God is meticulous and all-inclusive and extends to every single particular detail of life. There is nothing random in life—no coincidences or anything truly accidental, since every meticulous detail is under the sovereign hand of God.
 - “There is not even one rebel molecule running around loose in the universe, floating independent of the sovereignty of God.”